



## C. A Place of Arrival – Transportation and Trails

*Planning Principles: Poplar Point should be easily accessible by multiple modes of transportation and transit, including Metro, metrobus, water taxi, automobile and the Anacostia Riverwalk and Trail. Pedestrian and bicycle access should be prioritized by introducing trails and sidewalks from adjacent neighborhoods and from the Metro. Neighborhood access to Poplar Point should be strengthened with redesigned points of entry, including Howard Road, W Street and Good Hope Road.*

Poplar Point will become the number one arrival point for an experience of the Anacostia River, – its waterfront trails and promenades, its new recreation facilities on land and water, its nature areas and restored creeks and its parks, gardens and playfields. Building upon the extraordinary resource of an existing Metro station right in Anacostia Park at Poplar Point, a multi-modal system of both fun and efficient options for interlocking transportations services will make this possible.

Residents of Anacostia will find Poplar Point an integral part of the Historic Anacostia neighborhood with new and improved local access, visual links to the park, and easy shuttle access from Poplar Point to their favorite sites in Anacostia Park and other river destinations. Regional visitors will ride Metro to the Anacostia Station, and come up from the subway to experience a remarkable and expansive new view of the District’s landmarks. Tourists will start here, at the Metro station and garage, for a day’s journey up the River, taking in the joys of the National Park and the urban waterfront activities in Southeast and the Navy Yard just across the River. Bicyclists and hikers will mark Poplar Point as a welcome oasis along their route, offering orientation facilities to the River, options for transfer to other transportation modes, or a welcome refreshment with a moment to rest and enjoy a vista of the park and river.

Major regional investments in highways and bridges will, over the next 15 to 20 years, begin to relieve Poplar Point of the negative impacts of highways and bridges. Reconstruction along Interstate 295 and the Suitland Parkway, and

replacement of the Frederick Douglass Bridge will all contribute to expanded parklands, reduction of highway noise and a more attractive park setting.

Creative thinking by the WMATA leadership, integrating plans for circulator buses, regional access routes, easy transfer among modes, and links to pedestrian and bicycle routes should deliver significant improvements at Poplar Point within the first 5 years of AWI implementation. Careful design and phasing of highway and bridge improvements enhance access with the minimum negative effects and the greatest attention paid to a gracious new Frederick Douglass Bridge as the gateway to the Anacostia Waterfront.

### 1 Multi-Modal Transportation Center for Anacostia Park

Envisioned at Poplar Point is a multi-modal transportation center with the Metro station at its heart providing access to the Park and the community. Components of that Center will include:

**Anacostia Parks Orientation and Interpretation Center** – Thousands of people are predicted to use the Anacostia River Park System on a sunny Saturday. Coming by highway, on local streets or by Metro, thousands of individuals and families will seek information about events of the day, cultural and recreational facilities, landmarks on the horizon, history of place and practical issues of access, food and services. The orientation center can meet these needs, give visitors and regulars a point of orientation and vista, and encourage access by public transportation.

**Park Shuttle** – Multi-modal service will surely include a park shuttle bus to move users among waterfront sites and cultural facilities. The Metro station should serve as the primary shuttle origin point east of the river, with links to the water taxi dock, the new museums and monuments and the full range of recreation destinations. Connections to Historic Anacostia should also be considered. Graphics and schedule systems should be designed and coordinated to establish a distinctive image for the Park System.



**Circulator Bus** – WMATA is studying an expanded system of circulator buses to link neighborhoods and employment destinations to the Metro system. Routes, which circulate through the Park and neighborhood, would expand Park accessibility to transit-dependent households, older persons and youth.

**Water Taxi** – The new life of the Anacostia Waterfront with improved parks, community connections, and new urban waterfront neighborhoods in Southeast and at the Navy Yard can only be fully realized when life on the River begins to flourish and diversify. A water taxi moving back and forth between populated areas and recreation sites along the waterfront would add a new dimension to the Washington, DC waterfront and provide an alternative and beautiful way to access the Anacostia Park. Three potential stops at Poplar Point have been identified, and will offer an excellent connection to the regional transportation system. The three stops are at the end of Howard Road, thus restoring the historic “landing”, at the end of Good Hope Road providing a direct connection to Historic Anacostia, and in the middle of Poplar Point on axis with the Metro station.

**Light Rail** – Recent long-range studies for the addition of light rail to the public transportation system have considered a route through Anacostia with links to Metro. The Districts Department of Transportation starter line plan proposes using the Blue Plains spur of the existing rail line, which would link to the Metro station.

## 2      **Anacostia Metro Station**

At the heart of the multi-modal arrivals network at Poplar Point will be the Metro station itself. At present, the two station entrances are significantly separated with the north entrance linked to the WMATA parking garage and the south entrance to Historic Anacostia and the regional bus transfer facility. WMATA plans call for expansion of regional bus service as well as new circulator buses serving the south station entrance. Now that a major enhancement and expansion of Anacostia Park is planned at Poplar Point, the north entrance can be envisioned as truly a “park” station, offering direct access to all park functions.

Components of an improved Anacostia Park **Metro station** would include:

- Improved wayfinding
- Visual, physical and programmatic orientation to the Park
- A viewing tower – looking over the Park, the River and toward identified District landmark buildings and sites
- Easy access to shuttles, bicycle paths, trails, water taxi

**Joint Development** opportunities are also compelling at both locations of the Anacostia station, with its significant parcel holdings including:

- Garage site joint development to serve park users – retail, services, cultural facilities, museums, and recreational facilities
- Bus Transfer site joint development for office, housing or services to make a compatible, pedestrian friendly link between Historic Anacostia and new development sites north of the Metro station.

In all, a public transportation strategy that embraces multiple modes and envisions a model transit-served park and community will be a critical building block for success at Poplar Point.

## 3      **Bicycle and Pedestrian Trails**

Poplar Point will serve as a starting point for visitors who wish to experience the Anacostia River Parks System and other regional destinations by bike or by foot. Planned for Poplar Point and Anacostia Park are a series of interconnected bicycle and pedestrian trails that will provide safe and enjoyable access for visitors and residents. These trails will wind seamlessly through Poplar Point and access all destinations within Anacostia Park and attractions on both sides of the river, from the National Mall to the Frederick Douglass House in Historic Anacostia.



In addition to recreation purposes, commuters who work at the many jobs in the downtown core can also use these trails during the week. In this way, the trail will serve a similar purpose as many other regional trail systems such as the Rock Creek Trail in Washington and the Washington and Old Dominion Trail and Custis Trails in Virginia. Planning for bicycle commuters will have a positive impact on the regional highway system.

**Anacostia Riverwalk and Trail** – The paved trails on Poplar Point will be part of the new regional Anacostia Riverwalk and Trail. This will allow visitors to bike and walk up and down the river and reach numerous destinations along the waterfront. A component of the Riverwalk and Trail will be safe and direct connections across the River for residents, visitors and commuters. Redesigns of both the Frederick Douglass Bridge and the 11th and 13<sup>th</sup> Street Bridges provide significant opportunities for including pedestrian and bicycle facilities in the design. New signage will direct visitors along the Riverwalk and Trail and to popular destinations in Washington.

**On Poplar Point** – Pedestrian and bicycle trails will traverse all of Poplar Point. The primary paved trail will be along the waterfront and will connect Poplar Point with the Anacostia Riverwalk and Trail system and the rest of Anacostia Park. At the Point near the new Frederick Douglass Memorial Bridge, this trail will turn south and run along the Suitland Parkway and connect with other regional trail systems. There will also be a direct connection between the waterfront trail and the Anacostia Metro station.

The Anacostia Riverwalk and Trail will allow bicyclists, rollerbladers and others to enjoy the waterfront at Poplar Point, visit museums and memorials, and commute to jobs both in the downtown core and across the region. The trail will be approximately 10 feet wide, which is wide enough for bicyclists, rollerbladers and pedestrians. A typical cross-section of a trail is shown (below/right/left).

For visitors who wish to experience a slower pace, Poplar Point will contain a series of unpaved trails that will provide access to the museums and memorials and to the natural areas on site. These trails will be quieter and have less activity than the paved waterfront trail. These trails will balance access to most areas on Poplar Point while protecting the natural ecosystems, wetlands and wildlife habitat

from disturbance. For example, as they cross through wetlands, the trails may be wooden and raised on stilts to protect critical areas. A typical cross-section of an unpaved trail is shown (below/right/left).

For many visitors and residents, Poplar Point will be both a destination with new museums, memorials, and natural areas and a starting point on bicycle and walking trips up and across the Anacostia River. Chief among the arrival points will be the Anacostia Metro station. This station serves a vital role for accessing the waterfront because it is the only station within the entire Anacostia River Parks System. The plan for Poplar Point connects the Metro station to the waterfront trail via a paved and unpaved trails starting at the orientation center near the parking garage. On weekends, the parking garage can also be used by visitors who bring their bikes and begin trips up the River or to nearby destinations. Establishing connections between the Metro station and the park should be one of the first site improvements and should be closely coordinated with WMATA.

Other access points for Poplar Point include the Anacostia Riverwalk and Trail from Anacostia Park, the Frederick Douglass and 11th Street Bridges west of the river, and Historic Anacostia via Howard Road, W Street, and Good Hope Road.

**Regional Destinations** – Poplar Point will be connected to a number of regional destinations via dedicated trails and a series signed road networks. One connection will be along W Street and up to the historic Frederick Douglass House and Museum. Another connection will be to the Anacostia Museum and the Fort Circle Parks via W Street and trails from Suitland Parkway. To enhance these connections, the plan for Poplar Point calls for additional signage leading visitors to the destinations and upgrades to the streets making them welcoming environments for bicyclists and pedestrians (e.g., adding bike lanes, repairing sidewalks, and increased signage.)

**CSX Rail-Trail** – Part of the plan for the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative is the conversion of the existing CSX rail line into a dedicated bicycle trail. Converting the rail to a trail would preserve the right-of-way for future transportation uses (DOT has proposed a light rail starter line using the Blue Plains spur that can be shared with the trail right-of-way) and would provide a direct route for commuters to downtown from East of the River and Prince Georges County, Maryland. The



Figure 35: Opportunity for enhanced bike and pedestrian trails



Figure 36: CSX Rail Corridor adjacent to Poplar Point



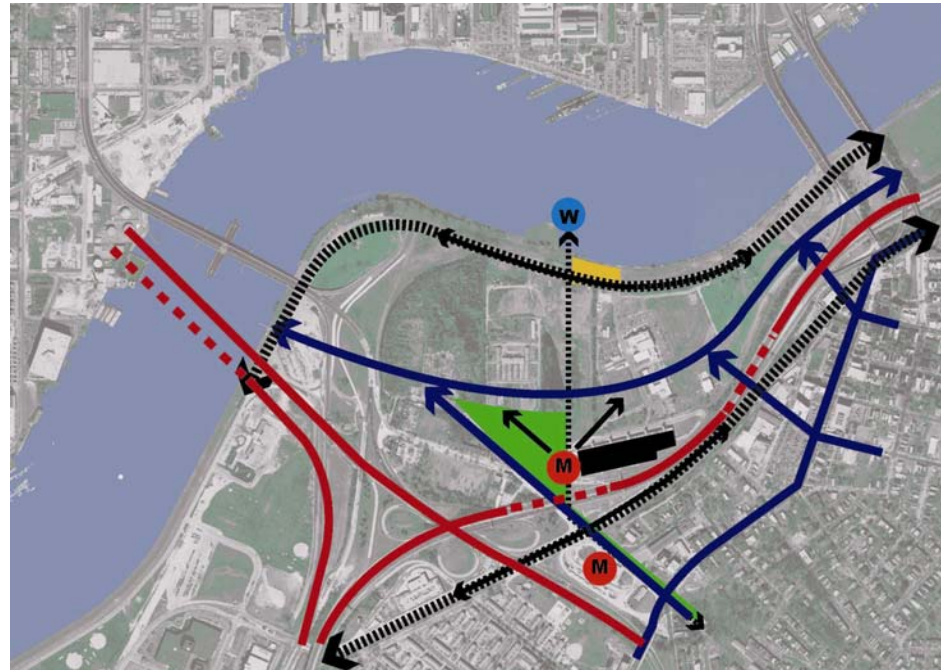


Figure 37: Improved community access and connection to Poplar Point

CSX Rail-Trail will be of similar character to other regional rail-trails (like the Washington and Old Dominion in Virginia and the Capitol Crescent Trail Washington and Maryland) with both paved and unpaved paths.

## 4 Improved Community Access and Connection

Presently, the neighborhoods surrounding Poplar Point are separated from the park and the waterfront by a series of physical barriers, the primary of which is I-295, the Anacostia Freeway. Points of access to the site are limited, routes are circuitous, and the pedestrian environment is unwelcoming. The plan for Poplar Point proposes a series of improvements to better connect the neighborhoods to the park, the cultural attractions and the waterfront. The improvements described below will ensure that Historic Anacostia, Fairlawn, Berry's Farm and other neighborhoods are reconnected with their waterfront.

**Howard Road** - Currently Howard Road runs beneath the Anacostia Freeway and connects the Anacostia Station and the bus facility to Poplar Point. As part of a larger plan to restore Poplar Point to a world-class park with monuments, museums, and memorials of national significance, Howard Road will become a primary entrance to the new district. The alignment of Stickfoot Creek, adjacent to Howard Road is also an opportunity to combine the roadway with open space and new development. Short of the removal or depression of the Anacostia Freeway, improvements such as lighting, streetscape and landscape will be necessary to bring this gateway to a higher level of amenity. Increase in sidewalk width and increased development adjacent to the underpass are two methods by which the under-bridge environment can be made safer and more pedestrian friendly. All of these options should be pursued in the implementation of the plan for Poplar Point.

**Good Hope Road** - The historic core of the Anacostia neighborhoods resides at the corner of Good Hope Road and MLK Avenue. For decades, both Anacostia Freeway and the ramps serving the 11th Street Bridge have separated Historic Anacostia from the river. Good Hope Road extends to the river below the freeway, and while providing needed access to the river from a key location, the nature of this underpass is not sufficiently welcoming to provide a safe or even obvious

gateway to the Anacostia Park. The AWI recommends improving Good Hope Road to make it a safer and more attractive entryway to Poplar Point and the Anacostia Park. Pedestrian amenities should be improved along with roadway improvements.

**W Street bridge over I-295** - The Frederick Douglass House is located on W Street just three blocks from the Anacostia Park. Despite its proximity to the park there is no clear visual or physical connection between this historic landmark and the Anacostia River. In addition, there are only two connections between Poplar Point and its surrounding neighborhoods, primarily due to the Anacostia Freeway.

The plan for Poplar Point proposes reconnecting the community to the waterfront with a pedestrian or vehicle bridge over the Anacostia Freeway at W Street. A bridge in this location would provide direct access to the park for more residents of Historic Anacostia. It would also ensure that the Frederick Douglass House is programmatically connected with future historical and cultural activities at Poplar Point including new museums and memorials that are recommended on the site.

**Wayfinding in the Community** - In addition to the physical improvements, the plan for Poplar Point calls for a complement of signs and other wayfinding devices to connect the community to the river and to connect the proposed museums and amenities to existing attractions east of the river such as the Frederick Douglass House and the Anacostia Museum. The wayfinding system will both better connect the community to the waterfront and visitors of museums, memorials, gardens and parks at Poplar Point to other destinations within the community.

**Green Fingers into the Community** - Concurrent to a system of wayfinding, the plan recommends developing a series of "green fingers" extending from Poplar Point into the neighborhood on all entry points – Howard Road, Good Hope Road, and the new crossing at W Street. These fingers, accentuated through trees, planting, or linear open spaces should extend the park into the community and provide a pleasant and safe environment for pedestrians, bicycles and other users. The fingers should extend from Poplar Point to key cultural and historical destinations East of the River and business districts along Martin Luther King Boulevard. Connecting these destinations will enhance the popularity of all destinations and generate economic development opportunities in Historic Anacostia.



## 5 Highways and Bridges

Throughout the AWI corridor, highways and bridges are significant barriers, sources of air and noise pollution, and visual intrusions on the life and character of waterfront uses. At the same time, the regional and local access system, which the highways and bridges serve, has significant inefficiencies while offering a less than attractive regional approach to the nation's capital.

Therefore, the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative is working hand in hand with local and regional transportation and civic organizations to attack the most significant transportation constraints while opening bold new possibilities for a vital urban life along the river. The thinking behind this approach and its potential for improvements in and around Poplar Point are outlined below.

### Regional Context

The freeway network was developed during the interstate era when the dominant thinking was to provide a high level of mobility for the private automobile. This focus led to freeway alignments and designs that provided high speed, high capacity facilities with little regard for the environment, the neighborhoods that they cut through, and human scale.

Now however, there are opportunities to ameliorate the damage caused by the freeway network. First, Washington's Metro system has matured, and the city has shown that it is ready to evolve further toward a more transit-oriented population. Technology is vastly improving the convenience of using public transportation through better scheduling, better information flow to users, and seamless fare collection and transferring.

Second, investment and reinvestment in highways for access and safety reasons is still essential in the region, opening up opportunities to redesign the system and reduce the impacts of large structures to create a more human scale. By planning new roadway connections, traffic loads on freeway segments can be reduced and changes in roadway configurations may be possible. For example, new

interchange forms have been developed that take less land but provide better operations from the standpoint of capacity and safety.

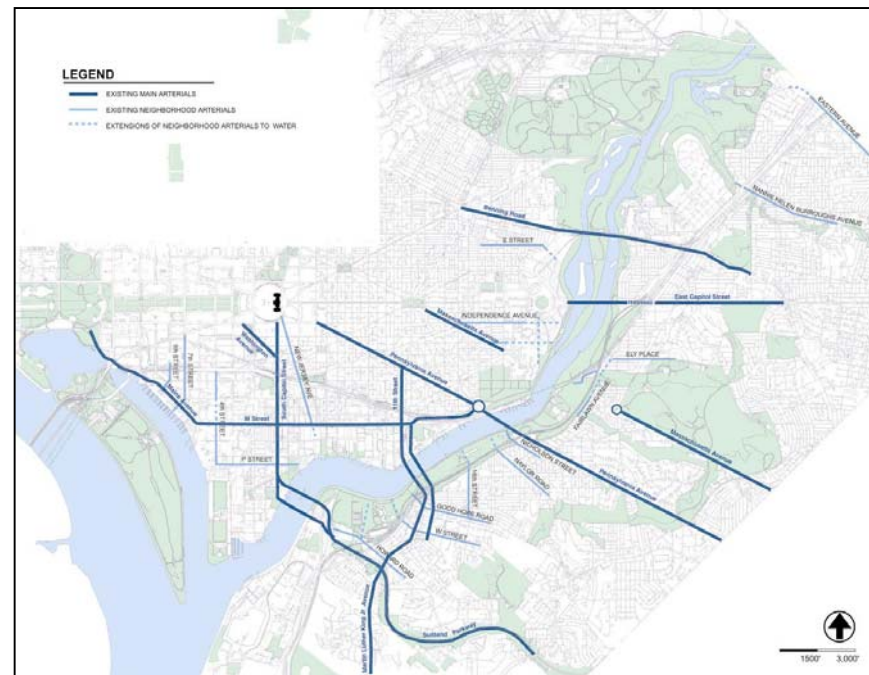
A basic premise of the highway-planning element of the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative has been to maintain the existing capacity of the system. However, our studies have determined that it may be possible to reduce the capacity of certain segments of the freeway network while at the same time providing good service to the same volume of traffic that the highways are currently carrying. This is because a number of turning movements are not provided in several of the interchanges on the freeway network. These turning movement restrictions actually cause some segments of the freeway network to carry more traffic than necessary.

For example, traffic on the Anacostia Freeway traveling from the northeast direction and destined to downtown cannot cross the Anacostia River at Pennsylvania Avenue or 11th Street, but must continue to the Douglass Bridge. Similarly, traffic on the Anacostia Freeway traveling from the south and destined to downtown cannot easily cross the river at the Douglass Bridge and must continue to the 11th Street Bridge. As a result, this segment of the Anacostia Freeway between the Douglass and 11th Street Bridges carries approximately 50,000 vehicles of average daily traffic more than it would if the freeway interchanges permitted all the movements. It may be possible to create a parkway-like environment in this section because of the reduction in expected traffic volume.

The bridges over the Anacostia River have the potential to be city and neighborhood landmarks. However, the bridges are more related to the freeway network than to the river, the waterfront and the adjacent communities. Motorists and pedestrians who cross the river must backtrack to access the river. In fact there are very few access points to some of the waterfront's key destinations, such as Anacostia Park and Poplar Point.

### Objectives for Anacostia Park and Poplar Point

Highways occupy a large portion of the area around Poplar Point. The interchanges with I-295, Route 1 and the Suitland Parkway occupy almost half of the Poplar Point area. These interchanges and the Anacostia Freeway, north of



Figures 38, 39: Studies are currently ongoing to propose modifications to the regional highway system. For more information refer to the AWI Framework Plan.

Poplar Point, create a barrier to the surrounding communities and create noise and pollution problems as well. The plan concept identifies an opportunity to shift the Frederick Douglass Bridge south, thereby shifting the associated interchanges and recapturing land area on Poplar Point currently being occupied by highway infrastructure. In addition, the plan also describes the Frederick Douglass Street Bridge being replaced by two structures. The first would be a tunnel through which the I-295 to I-395 connection will be made. The tunnel would carry the majority of the river-crossing traffic. The second structure would be a smaller, pedestrian/bicycle-friendly bridge that would serve the local street networks on both the east and west sides of the river. It would connect Suitland Parkway with South Capitol Street and would provide better access to the waterfront. The tunnel would “hide” the majority of the regional commuter traffic and would potentially decrease the noise levels near Poplar Point as well have a positive influence on the surface character of South Capitol Street.

The plan also identifies an opportunity to reconstruct the 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Street bridges. Currently, these bridges carry the majority of the I-295 (Anacostia Freeway) to I-395 traffic. With the tunnel concept described above, this connection would no longer be needed at the 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Street bridges. These bridges can be reconstructed to serve the local street network, pedestrians, and bicycles and would serve Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue and 13<sup>th</sup> Street on the east side of the river. There would be connections made to Anacostia Freeway, however the interchange would be designed as an urban interchange that would take less land area. This design should complement the traffic management plan of the affected community to maximize the benefits of the connections.

There may be opportunities at later stages to depress the Anacostia Freeway in sections, most probably in the area between Poplar Point and the Sousa Bridge. There would be prospects of bridging over the depressed sections to provide better access from the neighboring communities and extend the urban fabric of buildings and streets. This would decrease noise problems in the immediate area of the depression. As discussed in the Regional Context section, this section of I-295 could be properly landscaped to provide a more parkway-like driving experience and to decrease the effects of pollution.

The concept plan for Poplar Point and the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative serves to improve access to the waterfront, improve the efficiency of the highway network in order to alleviate traffic on the local street network and to improve the river crossings for the local communities, pedestrians and bicycles. There will be many transportation improvements in the area of Poplar Point and Anacostia Park planned for during the next 20 years. The planning and design phases of these improvements may provide opportunities to improve existing concerns, such as noise and air pollution in addition to transportation.

### Proposed Modifications to Regional Highways

1. Begin Environmental Impact Statement process for tunnel section. This is likely to take 10-15 years and should be started as soon as possible because without the tunnel, many of the other modifications cannot be implemented. During this time, the Pennsylvania Avenue Bridge on the east side of the river can be reconfigured to provide for all interchange movements.
2. Depress a section(s) of I-295 between Suitland Parkway and 11<sup>th</sup> Street and provide crossings to the waterfront.
3. Construct South Capitol Street ramps and tunnel.
4. Construct the local bridge connection between Suitland Parkway and South Capitol Street. Remove cloverleaf ramps at Suitland Parkway.
5. Reconstruct Howard Road on a new alignment crossing the freeway. Construct new connections between Suitland Parkway and the waterfront access roads.
6. Convert 11<sup>th</sup> Street/13<sup>th</sup> Street bridges to local bridges with limited access to DC295.